

الإسلام هو السلام



# Islam is Salām

*notes for a talk given by:*

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وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۚ

WA LA-DhIKRU-LLĀHI AKBAR

and the remembrance of Allāh is the greatest!  
(Sūrah al-Aʿnabūt 29:45)



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Until the philosophy which holds one race superior  
And another  
Inferior  
Is finally  
And permanently  
Discredited  
And abandoned -  
Everywhere is war -  
Me say war.  
That until there are no longer  
First class and second class citizens of any nation  
Until the colour of a man's skin  
Is of no more significance than the colour of his eyes -  
Me say war.  
That until the basic human rights  
Are equally guaranteed to all,  
Without regard to race -  
Dis a war.  
That until that day  
The dream of lasting peace,  
World citizenship  
Rule of international morality  
Will remain but a fleeting illusion to be pursued,  
But never attained -  
Now everywhere is war - war.



قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ ط  
قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ

qāla mā mana'aka 'alaa tasjuda 'idha 'amartuk?  
qāla ana khayrum-minh ; khalaqātānī min-nāriñw-  
wa khalaqātahu miñ ṭīn

(Allāh ﷻ) said:

“What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?”

He (the Shayṭān) said:

“I am better than he: You made me from fire, and him from clay.”

(Sūrah al-A'rāf 7:12)

## °Islām is Salām

As in other °Ibrahamic religions, peace is a basic concept in °Islāmic thought. The Arabic word ‘Islām’ (إسلام) is usually translated as “surrender” or “submission” in the sense of submission of one’s desires to the will of Allāh ﷻ.

This word – °Islām – is a verbal noun originating from the triliteral root *s-l-m* and is derived from the Arabic verb *salama*, which means, as we mentioned above, “to accept, surrender or submit to some one or something.”

The Arabic word *salām* (peace/سلام) has exactly the same root as the word *Islam* with the understanding that peace is only attained by utterly submitting oneself fully, totally and wholly to Allāh ﷻ. Thus, °Islām means both submission to Allāh ﷻ and peace.

Believers demonstrate this submission to Allāh ﷻ by worshipping Allāh ﷻ, following the commands of Allāh ﷻ, and avoiding the worship of other than Allāh ﷻ. The word has distinct connotations in its various occurrences in the Qur’ān. In some verses (°*ayāt/* (الآيات), there is stress on °Islām as an internal conviction:

فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ ط

fa-maṇy-yuridi-llāhu °aṇy-yahdiyahu yashraḥ ṣadrahu li-l-°islām

– and whoever Allāh wishes to guide –

he expands his heart for °Islām

(Sūrah al-°An°ām 6:125)

أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ء  
فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مِنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ء أُولَئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

°afamaṇ ṣharaḥa-llāhu ṣadrahu li-l-°islāmi fa-huwa °ala nūri mir-rabbih  
fa-waylul-l-l-qāsiyati qulūbuhum-min dhikri-llāh :

°ulāā°ika fī ḍalālim-mubin

Could one whose heart Allāh has expanded to [accept] °Islām,  
and he is illuminated by the Light of His Lord  
[be like one who is closed and remains in darkness?]

Woe to those whose hearts are hardened  
against the Remembrance of Allāh.

Surely such [people] are clearly in error.

(Sūrah as-Zumar 39:22)

## °Islām is Salām

Other verses connect °Islām and the dīn which is usually translated as “religion”, but also the meaning of a debt which must be repaid:

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ  
نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

°al-yowma °akmaltu lakum dīnakum wa °atmamtu °alaykum ni°mati  
wa raḍītu lakumu-l-°islāma dīnā

Today I have perfected your religion (*dīn*) for you  
and completed my favor upon you  
and chosen for you °Islām as your religion (*dīn*).

(Surah al-Māa'idah 5:3)

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ ؕ

°inna-d-dīna °inda-llāhi-l-°islām

Truly the religious way of life (*dīn*) with Allāh is self-surrender

(Surah °Āl °Imrān 3:19)

Still other °ayāt describe °Islām as an action of actually returning to Allāh ﷻ —more than just a verbal affirmation of faith.

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا ؕ

قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ ؕ

qālati-l-°a°rābu °amanna ; qul-lam tu°minū wa lākīn qūlū °aslamnā  
wa lammā yadākḥuli-l-°imānu fī qulūbikum.

The deep desert dwellers say, “We believe!”

Say [to them],

“You have not yet believed, but rather you have surrendered,  
for faith (°imān) has not yet entered your hearts.

(Surah al-Hujurāt 49:14)

This is based on the understanding derived from the well-known Hadīth of Jibril ؑ, in which one day, while the Prophet ﷺ was sitting in the company of some people, (the angel) Jibril ؑ came and asked, “What is faith (°imān/الإيمان)?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, ‘Faith is to believe in Allah, His angels, (the) meeting with Him, His Messengers, and to believe in the Resurrection (after death).’

“Then he further asked, “What is °Islām?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “To worship Allāh Alone and none else, to offer prayers perfectly, to pay the compulsory fee (*zakāt*/زكاة) and to fast during the month of Ramaḍān.” Then he further asked, “What then is perfection (°*iḥsān*/احسان) ?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, ‘To worship Allāh as if you see Him, and if you cannot see Him, know that He sees you.’”



To return to our original discussion of war and peace, we can say that war or the absence of peace is first of all caused by arrogance and pride, in which one person or people consider themselves to be inherently better than other people.

“I am better than he: You made me from fire, and him from clay.”

“I am better than he:

You made me white, and him black.”

“I am better than he:

You made me American, and him an Arab.”

“I am better than he:

You made me to speak English, and him to speak Chinese.”

“I am better than he:

You made me a Jew, and him a Christian.”

I am better than he:

You made me from the North, and him from the South.”

I am better than he:

You made me from the East, and him from the West.”

— and on and on and on —

“Until the philosophy which holds one race superior  
And another inferior is finally and permanently discredited

– and abandoned –

Everywhere is war -

That until there are no longer

First class and second class citizens of any nation

Until the colour of a man's skin

Is of no more significance than the colour of his eyes -

Me say war.”



And finally, when one goes beyond all forms of discrimination, racism, prejudice, xenophobia, chauvinism and bigotry one must, in the end and in the beginning, finally and completely surrender their “self” to Allāh ﷻ if there is truly to be a lasting peace.

Increasingly the people of the world understand that all forms of discrimination, racism, prejudice, xenophobia, chauvinism and bigotry must go; but the vast majority of the world’s population still do not grasp the imperative necessity for this act of total surrender (°istislām/استسلام) to Allāh ﷻ somehow imagining that this is something that is meant for the Arabs (though Arabs as such constitute only about 16% of the world’s Muslims), or for those people who live in what is euphemistically called the Muslim world.

In reality, if the Truth be known, °Islām is the path to peace for all individuals and the path to true peace in the world. And, indeed, there will be no real peace in the world until all of the world has surrendered to Allāh ﷻ and, as I write these words, I can see and hear some people gasping as they hear or read this, imagining that these are surely the words of yet another “Muslim” bigot and that what I say exactly confirms the worst fears of the various Newt Ginrichs, Sarah Palins, Gert Wilders, Robert Spencers, Pastor Terry Jones and Pamela Gellers of the world.

[Note: If this is being read in another era other than 2010 these are the names of well-known Islamaphobes living in this time.]

It is my ardent hope that the non-Muslim as well as the Muslim listener or reader will really try to understand the truth of what I am saying and not reject these words without due consideration.

Let me say that in addition to being a Muslim, after having surrendered and turned myself in some forty years ago in al-Quds, I am also a member of the Shādhḍhuli Şūfī School, and since I have already quoted from the Qur’ān and from the Prophet ﷺ I would like to bring your attention to what an illustrious Shaykh of our school, who in addition to being a Şufī was also a preeminent religious scholar (°alīm/عالِم), Shaykh Ibn °Aṭā°illāh as-Sakandarī رحمه الله, said in his book: Illuminating Guidance on the Dropping of Self-direction (*at-Tanwīr fī °Isqāṭ at-Tadbīr*/التنوير فى إسقاط التدبير) – the dropping of self-direction being in the end what this is all about.

In this excerpt from his book he makes clear the whole progression from beginning to end as it is derived from the Qur°ān which is, for Muslims, where everything ultimately begins and ends.

He writes, “Allah (High is He) has said:

“Who, therefore, turns away from the religion of °Ibrahīm ؑ except the one who fools himself? Indeed, We chose him in this world, and in the hereafter he shall be among the righteous. (2:130) When his Lord said to °Ibrahīm ؑ: ‘*Aslim!*’ (surrender/become a Muslim), he immediately said: ‘°*Aslimatu* (I have surrendered) to the Lord of all people.” (2:131)

[The true] religion in the sight of Allāh ﷻ is submission (°*islām*/الإِسْلَام). (from 3:19)

It is the faith of your father °Ibrahīm ؑ. He [Allāh] has named you *muslimīn* (those who submit/المُسْلِمِينَ) earlier. (from 22:78)

So submit (°*aslimu*/أَسْلَمُوا) to Him. (from 22:34)

And if they dispute with you [O Muhammad!], say: “I have submitted my whole being to Allāh (°*aslamtu*/أَسْلَمْتُ) and so has whosoever follows me.(وَمَنْ اتَّبَعَنِي)” (from 3:20)

Whoever desires a religion other than Islām, it shall not be accepted of him, and he shall be among the losers in the hereafter. (3:85)

And whosoever (*yuslim*/يُؤْسِلِمُ وَجْهَهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ) submits his whole self to Allāh while being a doer of good (وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ) then he has grasped the most firm hand hold. (فَقَدْ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى) (from 31:22)

Take my soul (at death) as one who has submitted to Your will and unite me with the righteous. (تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ). (from 12:101).

And [be it known] I am the first of those who bow to His will (*wana °awalu muslimīn*/وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ). (from 6:163)



Next he quotes the Prophet ﷺ saying, “He who has tasted the sweetness of secure faith (*al-°imān*) is one who is pleased with Allāh ﷻ as his Lord and the with the Way of Submission (*al-°islām*) as his religion and with Muḥammad ﷺ as his prophet.”



Now sweetness surely is one of the real tastes of peace, but what is important in this is what the Shaykh ﷺ says about the necessity of ceasing to choose for your self when the opportunity to surrender presents itself. As the Shaykh ﷺ goes on to say,

“The people of divine gnosis say, “Whoever does not plan for himself is planned for by Allāh ﷻ.” Our own shaykh, Sīdī °Abu-l-Ḥasan aṣḥ-Shādhidhul ﷺ says, “If it is such that there is no other way of action than planning, then plan not to plan. Make no choice upon your own authority in anything and choose not to choose. Flee from choice and from all things to Allāh ﷻ for,

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا  
فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

falā wa rabbika la yu°minūna  
ḥattā yuḥakkimūka fīmā ṣhajara baynahum  
tḥumma lā yajidū fī °aṇfusihim ḥarajam-mimmā qaḍayta  
wa yusallimū taslīma.

by your Lord  
they will not [really] believe until they make you [their] judge  
in all that they dispute about among themselves,  
and after that they find no resistance in themselves  
[concerning what you have], decided,  
and submit themselves with total submission.

(Sūrah Nisā° 4:65)

Here the Shaykh ﷺ points to the way of arriving at peace.

All of this given, again, that all forms of arrogance, false pride, discrimination, racism, prejudice, xenophobia, chauvinism and bigotry have been dropped and without any lingering doubt that you or your country or your race or linguistic group are, in truth, anything in Reality (ḥaqīqah) and such delusion is behind you, the way forward to lasting and secure peace both for the individual and the society rests in the surrender and total submission to Allāh ﷻ in what is ordered and what is forbidden.

This is so because it is precisely Allāh ﷻ that is both beyond and above everything as well as the Absolute Creator of everything.

This must be understood without any doubt.

This is what polytheism or *shirk* is all about. The niggling doubt or the simple refusal to believe and submit to the Truth that Allāh ﷻ is what *Is* and that beyond Allāh ﷻ or aside from Allāh ﷻ there is nothing that can be considered something or anything.

Until the human being understands this there is nothing that can really be achieved in the way of any real and lasting peace because any putative ‘other’ authority – be it the authority of the self, politics, religion, science, philosophy or metaphysic – is relative.

Until the human being acknowledges without any hesitation or doubt that only Allāh ﷻ is *the* Absolutely Real and is prepared to surrender wholly to that Reality, nothing in the way of peace is really possible, only, perhaps, the temporary cessation of various forms of war and even that is usually at the expense of others, given that out of the 6 billion plus people living on our planet some 4 billion live on less than two dollars a day and another billion or so live on less than one dollar a day.

This perhaps leads to our next program on “Justice” but I don’t want to go into that now; suffice it to say that there is no Peace without Justice and plainly there is a very demonstrable lack of justice in the world in which we find ourselves living.

Along the line of understanding the word ‘salam’, we should mention the greeting “as-sālaamu ‘alaykum” (السلام عليكم), used by all Muslims, meaning “Peace be upon you”. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Mankind are the dependents of Allāh ﷻ, and the most beloved people to Allāh ﷻ are those who are the most generous to His dependents. Know that none of you are believers until you love for your brother what you love for yourself.” The scholars of prophetic tradition (*ḥadīth*) such as Ibn Hajar al-°Asqalanī and Shārafuddīn al Nawawī have said that the words “your brother” means any person, irrespective of their faith or origin in line with the °āyāt:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

wa mā °arsalnāka °illā raḥmatal-li-l-°ālamīn

and We have not sent you except as a Mercy to all the Worlds  
(Sūrah al-°Ambiyā° 21:107)

In the time in which we live people have developed an overly sentimental idea of peace, perhaps because real peace is in such short supply and so difficult to find on an individual, communal or world level. Peace has become equated with rainbows and teddy bears – a kind of fairy tale in which everybody loves everybody and there is no conflict — something along the lines of John Lennon’s song of the early seventies, “Imagine”. (note: © John Lennon)

“Imagine there's no heaven  
It's easy if you try  
No hell below us  
Above us only sky  
Imagine all the people  
Living for today...

Imagine there's no countries  
It isn't hard to do  
Nothing to kill or die for  
And no religion too  
Imagine all the people  
Living life in peace...”

As a waggish reviewer of the lyrics said, “Let's face it... Probably some people are saying these lyrics are great because they have been programmed to say it is ... I don't think so!

“To me? They are rubbish, built from valuable substance, but you can use diamonds to make something meaningless, and you can use straw to build a beautiful home... Art is like that! John Lennon may have been a good artist, but these lyrics are pure rubbish!”

The reviewer then went on to suggest more realistic lyrics,

“Imagine there is no heaven.  
Imagine there is no hell.  
Imagine everyone living for today.  
When Money, Fame and Sex  
takes the place of this troublesome God.  
Imagine people killing one another.  
Committing all kinds of deception.

°Islām is Salām

Imagine all the evil people corrupting one another.  
Committing rape, abusing children and trafficking in human flesh  
for Money, Fame and Sex.

Imagine these beautiful times  
No God, No Heaven, No Hell  
Hurrray!

Let's all live for today  
And the pleasure it will give us!"



No doubt the suggested lyrics can be improved upon, but when you consider the actual reality of the time in which we live they seem much closer to reality and the problems that most people confront when they try to imagine how they will actually live in peace.

One only has to view the latest pictures of Hillary Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Jordanian King Abdullah II and the Egyptian President Mubarak, and listen to their vacuous words delivered up for ten-second sound bites, to realise that there will never be any "peace" in the middle east under the aegis of such people and their governments. How could there be? One look at them and you can see the answer written in their faces.

People who are not at peace cannot and do not make peace.

That is why we have to insist – unpopular as it may be – that there is no possibility for any kind of peace without the total and unconditional surrender of oneself to Allāh ﷻ.

Only the one who can say and does say:

إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ  
لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ۖ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

°inna ṣalāti wa nusukī wa mahyāya wa mamātī li-llāhi rabbi-l-°ālamīn  
lā-ṣharīkah lahu : wa bi-dhālika °umirtu wa °ana °awwalu-l-muslimīn  
“Truly my worship, my sacrifice, my living, my dying are for Allāh,  
Lord of all the Worlds, in whose Divinity none has a share.

This I am commanded and I am the first to surrender.”

(Sūrah al-°An°ām 6:162-163)

Looking at Hillary Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Jordanian King Abdullah II and the Egyptian President Mubarak; can anyone imagine that any one of them would or could say:

“I am the first to surrender.”

How much are any one of them prepared to give for true peace?

And in truth, considering the interests they all represent how could any of them surrender, but – again – imagine.

Imagine they could surrender. Imagine they could all put their faces on the earth and lift their hearts above their heads. Finally lay down their burdens. Imagine they could all agree that there is – again in truth – only one Being who has provided all of us with the real peace plan whereby all of us can truly live together – every one beneath his vine and fig tree in peace and not afraid.

And if you ask, “Would they then all have to be Muslim?” I remind whoever is listening or reading that the Allāh ﷻ and His Prophet ﷺ made very clear that, whilst the Qur°ān is the completion of all Revelation and true, final, and eternal message to humanity, the People of the Book (°*Ahlu-l-Kitāb* / أهل الكتاب), precisely because they do recognize the G-d of °Ibrahīm ﷺ as the one and only G-d, as do Muslims, and because they practice revealed faiths based on divine ordinances, are justly accorded tolerance and autonomy. (Sūrah Āl °Imrān 3:64)

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا  
اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ؕ  
فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

qul-yā°ahla-l-kitābi ta°low °ilā kalimatiñ sawāā°i-baynana wa  
baynakum °allā na°buda °illāā °llāha wa lā nushrika bihī shay°añw-  
wa lā yattakhidha ba°ḍunā ba°ḍan °arbābām-miñ dūni-llāh ;  
fa°iñ tawallow fa qūlu-sh-hadū bi°annā muslimūn.

Say, “Oh People of the Book. Come to an agreement between us and you that we shall worship naught but Allāh, and not ascribe any partner and none of us shall take for lords any but Allāh” And say, if they turn away, “Bear witness that we are those who surrendered to Allāh”.

وَلَا تَجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ  
إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ ۖ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ  
وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

wa lā tujādilū °ahla-l-kitābi °illā bi-l-latī hiyā °aḥsan ;  
°illa-l-ladḥīna ḍḥalamū minhum

wa qūlū °āmannā bi-l-ladḥī °uñzila °ilaynā wa °uñzila °ilaykum  
wa °ilāhunā wa °ilāhukum wāḥiduñw-wa naḥnu laḥū muslimūn

and do not argue with the People of the Book save in the kindest manner,  
except [for] those who oppress [themselves and others],  
and say,

“We believe in that which has been sent down to us  
and that which has been sent down to you  
and our G-d and your G-d are One [G-d],  
and to Him we are surrendered.

(Sūrah al-°Aāḱabūt 29:46)



Were this the level of discussion and negotiation, is there any doubt that the outcome of all such negotiations, be they in Palestine or Iraq or Afghanistan or Pakistan or Chechnya or the Phillipines or Kashmir or Yemen or Somalia or any of the other many troubled and war-torn areas of the world would be substantially of a different order?

But such thinking is, perhaps, just as cognitively biased as the lyrics of “Imagine”. When our Ṣaykh, Abu-l-Ḥasan ؒ was about to begin his efforts at teaching, he asked his teacher, Sīdī Ibn Mashīsh ؒ for advice. The Ṣaykh told him, “Remember this and you will never go wrong. Allāh is Allāh and people are people. Don’t confuse them.”

It is, however worth understanding why all the many efforts at making real peace in the world seem to fail. It is all in how things are gone about and the way such efforts are undertaken are bound to fail because there is no recognition of Who is the Peace and Where peace comes from and how it can be found.

Rather than pursuing this avenue of investigation into world peace, it is more fruitful, given the time we have, to look more deeply into understanding how an individual may arrive at real peace in his/her life.

وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى دَارِ السَّلَامِ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

wa-llāhu yadā°ūū °ila dāri-s-salām ;  
wa yahdī mañy-yashā°u °ila širātim-mustaqīm

And Allāh calls to the Abode of Peace!

And He guides whom He chooses to a straight path.

(Sūrah Yūnus 10:25)

A very crucial ingredient that must be added to our understanding of the “how” of reaching this peace beyond – 1.) dropping all forms of intolerance, racism and bigotry – in short the šayṭānic impulse – and 2.) total surrender at every level of our beings down to the very breath of our lives, is 3.) to be chosen.

Notice Allāh ﷻ says, “He guides whom He chooses.”

We must then ask what, or perhaps more importantly, how is one chosen?

This takes us back to what we touched upon earlier in this talk/essay which is the whole area of “Dropping Self Direction.” or choosing not to choose in order that one may be chosen.

Shaykh Abu-l Ḥasan ﷺ says, “All choices and orders of Divine Law (*sharī°ah* / شريعة) are the choosing of Allāh ﷻ with which you have nothing to do. So listen and obey. This is the place of divine understanding and direct knowledge from the Presence, and is the ground for receiving the science of reality (*ḥaqīqah* / حقيقة) that descends from Allāh ﷻ for anyone who is mature.”

What the Shaykh ﷺ really means by these words is that all of one’s choices of the Divine Law do not nullify or invalidate one’s choosing the station of servitude (°ubūdīyah / عبودية) which is founded on the abandonment of personal choice (*tadbīr* / تدبير).

That is so that a deficient intellect will not be deceived into imagining that the various religious practices and obligations and daily occupations, and the choice of which of the various extra-voluntary actions (*nafl* / نفل) to perform, take the servant off the carpet of servitude because he thinks he has ‘chosen’ So the Shaykh makes clear that that the various choices, provisions and ordering of the Divine Law have nothing to do with you in the personal sense.

You are only requested to leave what you decide for your self and what you choose for it to Allāh ﷻ rather than getting in the way.

In this vein we find, in the famous Hadīth Qudsī,

“I am as My servant thinks I am. I am with him when he makes mention of Me. If he makes mention of Me to himself, I make mention of him to Myself; and if he makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assemble better than it. And if he draws near to Me an arm's length, I draw near to him a fathom's length. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed.” Related by al-Bukhārī (also by Muslim, at-Tirmidhī and Ibn-Majah)

and even more to the point:

“Whosoever shows enmity to someone devoted to Me, I shall be at war with him. My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works until I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it. I do not hesitate about anything as much as I hesitate about [seizing] the soul of My faithful servant: he hates death and I hate hurting him.” It was related by al-Bukhārī

as well as this part of a longer ḥadīth,

“O My servants, all of you are astray except for those I have guided, so seek guidance of Me and I shall guide you...” Related by Muslim

When Bāyazād Bastāmī (بایزید بسطامی) ؓ was asked, “What do you want?” He replied, “I want not to want.”

So when we take all of this into consideration, along with the understanding that Allāh ﷻ is inviting us to the Abode of Peace concomitant with our being chosen for that Abode, we will come to understand, as has been mentioned at the beginning of this talk/essay, that the key to this is first of all surrendering to what Allāh ﷻ has ordered — “My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him”, and then, “My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works until I shall love him”.



This latter point is extremely important to understand.

Many Muslims, even those who know better or should know better, imagine that they are doing something for Allāh ﷻ in submitting or surrendering, when in truth Allāh ﷻ doesn't 'need' anything from us for Allāh ﷻ is aṣ-Ṣamad (الصمد) (112:2) and as such is The Eternal, The Absolute and The Self-Sufficient and beyond the need for anything from anyone, whereas we are in need of everything.

Furthermore, Allāh ﷻ is The Owner of All (*māliki-l-mulk*/مالك الملك) (3:26), The Rich, The Independent (*al-ghaniyy*/الغني) (3:97) as well as being the ultimate Enricher (*al-mughni*/المغني) (9:28). So what need does Allāh ﷻ have of us, for it is, in reality (*ḥaqīqah*/حقيقة), we who are truly the needy (*al-fuqarā*°/الفقراء) and we who are truly in need?

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ° وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ

yā āyyuha-n-nāsu °antum-u-l-fuqarā°u °ila-llāh  
wa-llāhu huwa-l-ghaniyuu-l-ḥamīd

Oh People! You are the poor in need of Allāh.  
And Allāh is The Self-Sufficient, the Praised.  
(Sūrah al-Faṭir 35:15)

Many of the misunderstandings of this kind arise from a mistaken idea of who or what Allāh ﷻ is. As ibn al-°Arabi رحمه الله observed very few Muslims really actually worship Allāh ﷻ, but rather worship the idea they have constructed in their minds of Who Allāh ﷻ is.

Most human beings who are still possessed by their *nafs* confronted with the necessity of absolute surrender, they find it abhorrent and only reluctantly surrender because they do, °alḥamdu-li-Llāh understand that Allāh ﷻ really does exist and that Allāh ﷻ is really quite serious about the whole issue of necessity for surrender and submission (°*itislām*/إسلام). Somehow they never really grasp the real reason behind their surrender, continuing to imagine that they are doing it for Allāh ﷻ whereas, in Truth, they are ultimately submitting for their own sake. And this act of surrender and submission is the avenue, and as we have tried to make clear, the Only certified true means, to lasting peace — internally and externally.

This is, in actuality, the central point of this talk/essay and if I can communicate one thing, this is what I really want the listener or reader to come away with.

Nobody (and again I mean nobody under the sway of their *nafs*) ever really wants to give it up, to turn themselves in, to finally surrender and submit to Allāh ﷻ. So the last ditch call of the *nafs* even when it is forced to surrender and submit is, “I am doing this for Allāh ﷻ” thus keeping the *nafs* alive, because it is “I” who am doing this, even in the act of surrender. In fact their surrender is only for their own sake, because if they don’t surrender they will never have any form of actual and lasting peace in this life or any hope of a final life of bliss.

I like the transliterated word °*itislām* for this reason (among others) as it says it all:

It is Islām.

Again I know that statements like this rile all the interfaithers and those who persist in following and acting out the arcane and archaic rites and remains of former truths, especially the Jews and Christians, not to mention the many atheists and agnostics (and even Muslims who don’t really understand what °Islām is). But if you really can, come to understand Who Allāh ﷻ Is and that, beyond Allāh, there is not anything or any One that can in Truth certify or attest to the Truth in anything or about anything and that, conveniently for us, Allāh ﷻ in His Ultimate Mercy and Compassion made it possible for any and all human beings to know this through the last and final Testament (al-Qur°ān) in which the whole equation is laid out in full detail and that which is not specifically detailed is clarified in and by the actions (*sunnah*/سنة) in this world of the Seal of all the Prophets, peace and blessing be upon all of them and him and his family.

And not only that but also it is very simple.

As the Prophet ﷺ says,

بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ: شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ، وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ، وَحَجَّ الْبَيْتِ، وَصَوْمَ رَمَضَانَ

“buniya-l°islāmu °ala kḥamsin: shahādati °an lā ilāhā °illa-llāh wa anna muḥammadar-rasūlu-llāh, wa °aqāmi-ṣ-ṣalāti wa °itā°i-z-zakāti wa ḥajji-l-bayti wa ṣawmi ramadān.”

“Islam is built upon five things - on testifying that there is no god but Allāh, and that Muḥammad is His Messenger; on performing the *ṣalah*; on paying the *zakāt*; on *ḥajj* to the House; and on fasting Ramaḍān.” (reported by both Muslim and Bukḥarī)

That's all it takes to turn yourself in – to finally give up and submit. And those five things, which again I stress, we are not doing for Allāh ﷻ but for our own selves, are the means to true everlasting peace. I would like to go through them one by one with an eye on how they are a means to peace — again both inward and outward.



### Shahādah (الشهادة) or Witnessing

Simply, Shahādah means “to know and believe without suspicion, as if witnessed or seen”. It also means testification or attestation and as such is the means by which one becomes, or is, a Muslim.

It is also known as the “Kalimatu-sh-Shahādat” or “Kalimah”. The Shahādah, being the basic declaration of belief in the Oneness of Allāh ﷻ, coupled with the acceptance of Muḥammad ﷺ as the final Prophet and Messenger of Allāh ﷻ. The declaration reads:

لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله

lāa ʾilāha illa-llāh muḥammadur rasūlu-llāh

There is no deity but Allāh

Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh.

If one is born into a Muslim family, this declaration is whispered into one's ears at birth and if one is a revert to °Islām it is a formal declaration made in front of witnesses by which one ‘becomes’ a Muslim.

Many born Muslims or born again Muslims mistakenly believe that either the hearing of the shahādah at birth, or declaring it as a consenting adult, is the end of the shahādah and, even though one prays daily, fasts yearly, pays zakāt often, makes ḥajj at least once in their life and so forth, the shahādah is a kind of a one-time event, and that once either you heard it at birth or came to formally declare your °Islām as a result of spiritual or intellectual search or, sometimes if you are a man, as a result of marrying a Muslim woman, the matter is closed and there is nothing to “do” beyond that.

This is far from the truth. Just as in, for instance, Evangelical Christianity, witnessing is very much an ongoing thing whereby in and with one's life one declares over and over again the truth of the declaration “There is no deity but Allāh Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh.”

Consider the two following excerpts from the Qurʾān:

كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ

kataba rabbukum °alā nafsihi-r-raḥmah  
your Lord has written Mercy upon Himself.  
(Sūrah al-°An°ām 6:54)

and once again

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

wa mā °arsalanāka °illā raḥmatal-li-l-°ālamīn

and We have not sent you except as a Mercy of all the Worlds  
(Sūrah al-°Ambiyā° 21:107)



Since Allāh ﷻ has prescribed or written The Mercy (*ar-raḥmah*/الرَّحْمَةُ) on or for Himself, and since it is Allāh ﷻ who has sent the Messenger to be Mercy (*raḥmah*/رَحْمَةً) to all creatures and all beings in all the worlds, what then would this witnessing be other than the witnessing of that Mercy to all whom you meet and everything you come into contact with. This is the truth of the shahādah not as some once-heard or once-repeated formula, but rather as the means by which one actually goes about living one's life and the living example one provides in every detail and manifests in all aspects of that life.

In truth this is the essence of what we call the practice (*sunnah*/سنة) of the Prophet ﷺ.

Some imagine that the *sunnah* is a matter of putting on a turban or growing a beard or wearing hijab or sitting on the floor to eat or praying certain prayers or saying certain supplications, etc. No doubt those acts and actions and many more form part of the prophetic practice or sunnah but there is a much deeper dimension which, if missing, can actually obviate all of those acts and render them to be acts of hypocrisy (*nifāq*/نِفَاق) since belief (°imān/إِيمَان) not accompanied by right actions (°amal ṣāliḥ/عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ) is hypocrisy.

In reality the essence of the sunnah is to be a merciful human being to all whom you meet for, if Allāh ﷻ has prescribed Mercy for Himself and sent His Prophet ﷺ as a Mercy, how could anyone who believes Allāh ﷻ exists and considers themselves to be a follower of the Prophet ﷺ do or be anything less?

And if one acts as a Mercy, giving witness to both the truth of Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, what other peace would be the result of one's actions and one's being? What would anyone get or obtain as a result of being in contact with you but Mercy and from it – Peace.

If one deeply understands these two excerpts from the Qur'ān and actively applies them – which is to say makes one's life a living witness of the truth they embody – there can be no doubt that this world, at the very least in the limited arena of one's own being and personal relationships, will be a far more peaceful place.

If then one takes Shāhādah to a higher level, and makes it the very basis of one's life and the motivator of all of one's actions, it is possible to enlarge that circle far beyond the immediately personal.

From the shari'ah point of view °Islāmic scholars have developed, based on the data of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, essential criteria for an expression of the Shāhādah to be considered earnest and without which the Shāhādah is considered to be meaningless. These include:

- al-°Ilm (علم): Knowledge of the meaning of the Shāhādah, its negation and affirmation.
- al-Yaqīn (يقين): Certainty – perfect knowledge that counteracts suspicion and doubt.
- al-°Ikhḷās (إخلاص): Sincerity which negates shirk (associationism).
- aṣ Ṣidq (صدق): Truthfulness that permits neither falsehood nor hypocrisy.
- al-Mahabbah (محبة): Love of and for the Shāhādah and its meaning, and being pleased and content with it.
- al-°Istislām (استسلام): Submission to its rightful requirements, which are the duties that must be performed with sincerity to Allāh ﷻ alone seeking His pleasure in the performance of our deeds.
- al-Qubūl (قبول): Acceptance that contradicts any form of rejection.

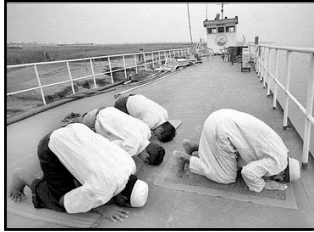
The second part of the Shāhādah carries several conditions as well:

- To believe in the Prophet ﷺ and in whatever he said and conveyed in his message as the Seal of the Prophets ﷺ.
- To obey the Prophet ﷺ in whatever he ﷺ commanded.
- To stay away from or avoid whatever the Prophet ﷺ commanded us not to do.

- To follow or emulate the Prophet ﷺ in our worship (*‘ibādah/عبادة*), manners (*‘akhlāq/أخلاق*), and in our way of life.
- To love the Prophet ﷺ more than we love ourselves, our family or anything else in this world.
- To understand, practice, and promote the sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ in the best way possible, without creating chaos, enmity or harm but instead, spreading mercy and peace wherever we are or go.

In this regard perhaps the most pre-eminent and widely known outward form of the sunnah is the ṣalāt (الصلاة), which is the five time ritual ‘prayer’ of the Muslim. I put quotes around the word ‘prayer’ because although prayer is part of the ṣalāt, there is far more to the ṣalāt than is covered by the English word ‘prayer’, which tends to be understood as a form of supplication (*du‘a’/دعاء*).

I am fond of saying to those of my more politically inclined Muslim brothers (and sisters) that the true Muslim State is a Muslim in the act of prostration (*sajdah/سجدة*) during their ṣalāt.



Indeed from a personal perspective I have found no more peaceful place in this world than in the *sajdah*, though of course all of the various positions of the ṣalāt have their unique blessing and meaning.

The Prophet ﷺ once said, “The simile of the five prayers is like a flowing river of sweet water in front of the door of one of you, in which he plunges five times a day. What dirt will remain on him? They said, “None.” He said, “Surely the five prayers eliminate sins just as water eliminates dirt.” (Bukhārī, Muslim)

Indeed the first question to be asked on the Day of Standing Forth from the Grave (يوم القيامة) will be about the ṣalāt.

Man has two standing positions (*mawqif/موقف*) in front of his Creator, one in this world and one in the next. The first is his prayer-mat on which he stands in his regular ṣalāt before his Lord (*rabb/رب*).

The second standing will be on the Day of Resurrection (*yawmu-l-qiyaamah* / يوم القيامة) when his actions will be brought forward as evidence. If his first standing is found to be correct, his second standing will be made easy for him. If his first standing was faulty, he will face immense difficulties in the second standing.

Abu Dhar (أبو ذر الغفاري) رضي الله عنه narrated that once the Prophet ﷺ came out in autumn when the leaves were falling. He took hold of a branch (and shook it) and its leaves started falling. Then he said:

“O Abu Dhar!” I said, “At your service oh Messenger of Allāh!” He said, “Whenever a Muslim prays seeking the Pleasure of Allāh, his sins start falling like the leaves of this tree.” (Musnad Aḥmad)

Rabia<sup>c</sup> bin K<sup>c</sup>ab said, I was with the Prophet ﷺ one night, and I brought him water and what he required. He said to me: “Ask (anything you like).” I said, “I ask your company in Paradise.” He said, “Anything else besides that?” and I said, “That is all I want.” He then told me, “Then help me to achieve this for you by devoting yourself often to prostration (*sajdah*).” (Muslim)

All the postures of prayer from the standing through the bowing to the prostration and also the sitting are internally symbolic of humanity’s relationship to the Divine, moving as they do from standing in assertion of existence and strength, to the bowing of humility and servitude, to prostration in the face the overwhelming Magnificence and Power of Allāh ﷻ and the corresponding realization of one’s own utter nonexistence.

From the station of utter abasement in *sajdah*, the worshipper returns to an intermediate position, between annihilation and independence, to sit (*jalsah* / جلسة) to greet first Allāh ﷻ and then His Prophet ﷺ and sending peace and blessings upon him and his family as well as on the Prophet °Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and his family.

[As a side note, it is deeply unfortunate that the majority of Jews have no knowledge that Muslims send the greetings of peace on the Prophet °Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and his family at least 5 times daily in *jalsah*.]

From ḥadīth above (and more like them) we can easily see the value of the ṣalah in all its forms and postures in terms of one’s eternal bliss which we call the Jannah (جنة) or the Garden, but it is fair to ask how this translates into our attempts to widen the circle of peace.

In his book “*Islam and World Peace*” M.R. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen writes the following:

“To be in Islam is to act with virtue, modesty, compassion, peacefulness, forbearance, Allah’s three thousand gracious attributes, His unity, His tranquility, and His equality. Islam embraces all equally in both joy and sorrow. If one is hungry, all are hungry. If one is sad, all are sad. If one is happy, all are happy.

“In this state of Islam, if we have a quarrel with somebody after the afternoon prayer, we must make peace, and embrace each other by the time of the evening prayer. Any evil influences created must be thrown away before the next time of prayer. We must ask Allah for forgiveness for the faults we committed and strive for repentance. “

“My brothers who are true believers must realize this. There should be no divisions among those who, with perfect faith, have accepted the truth of Allah and affirmed the kalimah. All those who worship Him and pray to Him should pray in unity. All must unite as one in times of sorrow and in times of joy, in death and in life.”

Clearly anyone with such an attitude and acting in such a manner will definitely widen the circle of peace.



إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

°innū °ana-llāhu lā °illahā illā °ana  
fā°budni wa °aqimi-ṣ-ṣalata li-dhikrī

Surely I am Allāh there is no deity but Me  
So worship Me and establish the ṣalāh to remember Me.

(Sūrah Tā Hā 20:13)



The act of prayer is mentioned in the Qur°ān about thirty-five times, but never alone. Allāh ﷻ almost always couples the ṣalāh with the paying of the zakāh (زكاة) to our parents, relatives, orphans, the poor, and the traveling alien in that order (2:215). As such ṣalāh and zakāh are inseparable. They are, you could say, husband and wife.

As an earlier Prophet of °Islam, °Isā bin Maryam ﷺ said,

وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا

wa ja°alanī mubārakan °ayna mā kuntu  
wa °awṣanī bi-ṣ-ṣalāti wa-z-zakāti mā dumtu ḥayyā

and He blessed me wherever I may be and  
and He has enjoined upon me the ṣalāh and the zakāh so long as I live.  
(Sūrah Maryam 19:31)

الَّذِينَ يَتِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ

alladhīna yuqimūna-ṣ-ṣalāta wa yu°tūna-z-zakāta  
wa hum bi-l-°ākḥirati hum yūqinūn

Those who establish the ṣalah and pay the zakāh  
and are certain of the final life.  
(Sūrah Luqmān 31:4)

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

wa °aqimū-ṣ-ṣalāta wa yutū-z-zakāta  
wa °aṭīū-r-rasūla la-°allakum turḥamūn

So establish the ṣalah and pay the zakāh  
and obey the Messenger so that perhaps you may receive mercy.  
(Sūrah Nūr 24:56)

The literal meaning of zakāh is to grow (in goodness) or ‘increase’, ‘purify’ or ‘make pure’ and the vital importance of zakāh is reflected in the saying of Allāh ﷻ:

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۚ فَسَأَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ

wa raḥmati wasi°at kulla shay ;  
fa-sā°aktubuhā li-l-ladhīna yattaqūna wa yu°tūna-z-zakāh

“My mercy encompasses all things,  
but I will ordain it for the righteous ones who pay the zakāh.  
(Sūrah al-A°rāf 7:156)

Zakāh must be given away “on the day of harvest” (6:141). Whenever we receive ‘net income’, the “known amount” of zakāh should be paid or set aside (see 70:24). This known amount, as Allāh ﷻ calls it, is 2.5%, and knowledge of this amount of 2.5% was passed down to us, generation after generation from the time of °Ibrāhīm ؑ to the present time, as were the recipients and the order in which they should be paid as we have mentioned above (2:215). As we see from 6:141, zakāh should be paid all year around and not only during the month of Ramaḍān or at the beginning of the year.

I personally witnessed my own teacher, Shāykh Dr. °Ibrāhīm al-Batawī ؑ paying his zakāh from money that came in from his bookstore and agricultural implements store, every day without fail.

When it comes to zakāh and its relation to peace, inward and outward, it is easy to understand the vital link between the two.

From a contemporary religio/political perspective, consider this opinion of the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (*Awqaf*) in Egypt:

“The object of Zakāh is the good of the Islamic state, with all its individual members as well as the whole community, and its general welfare. As for the individuals, Zakāh takes care of the poor, the needy and the wayfarers. As for the community, apart from the fact that the welfare of the individual reflects on the welfare of the community, it has another advantage relating to those who are in debt.

“As for the good of the state, this is realized through the insuring of a nobler life for all individuals through the laying aside of a sum of money to be spent in the way of Allāh. It is an obvious fact that the welfare of the Islamic state is assured through the conservation of the religion of Allāh and through those whose hearts are reconciled, who also reap the fruits of charity.

“Poverty is definitely the biggest problem to confront the individual during his lifetime. Most states have to contend with this in varying ways. The poor man who lives in a rich community, the individual members of which do not respond to him by giving to him so that he can live, feels deprived. From this feeling of deprivation is born the hatred of this community and its members. Most of the crimes committed by certain individuals are due to poverty. When the poor person feels that he is an outcast, his hatred for the rich man, who keeps his money back from him, grows.

“Most of the revolutions that have happened are mainly due to poverty, due to the fact that the poor feel that they are left behind in the cavalcade of society. Even in the international scene, we find that most wars are due to the fact that some states desire to ensure the welfare and prosperity of their peoples by expansion, as well as by raising the economic standard in order to find for the poor the means to live. Most states, however, have resorted to various experiments in the attempt to ensure that their peoples are immune from poverty.

“No other system can stand on the same level with the Islamic system, which has laid down true cooperative socialism by means of Zakāh – in which the person who is able to do so pays a stipulated portion in accordance with what he has – this is true socialism. And he pays willingly and by choice – this is true cooperation Zakāh is also one way of preventing the spreading of principles that help make the poor grudge the rich their wealth and make them hate society. It is the means of establishing love and friendship amongst people, rich and poor alike, a feeling of cooperative socialism (اشتراكية). “

Not a seemingly very spiritual perspective but none the less a fairly accurate take on the pressures facing many people in our world as was clearly understood more than a thirteen hundred years ago by the great scholar, °Imām Ja°far aṣ-Ṣādiq (جعفر الصادق) who wrote:

“Zakāh has been prescribed for the purpose that the rich people should be tested and the poor should be helped. If people had paid Zakāh for their wealth there would have been no indigent Muslim. On the other hand, by means of this right fixed for the poor by Allāh the poor would have become free from need. Hence, if poor and hungry persons are found, it is on account of the sin committed by the rich, and it is only appropriate that Allāh may withhold His blessings from those people who have not attended to the rights of the needy”.

“Allāh has fixed 25 dirhams as Zakāh out of 1000 dirhams [2.5%], because He has created the human beings and knows the extent of their needs. He knows that out of every 1000 persons 25 are poor and has fixed their share accordingly. And if the number of such persons had been more than this He would have fixed a larger share for them, because Allāh is their Creator and is aware of their condition”. (*Man La Yahzurulhul Faqih*, p.151)

Subḥan-Allāh how clear is this understanding of proportionality.

The Prophet ﷺ said that, “If people refrain from paying Zakāh, the Blessings of Allāh ﷻ will also be withheld from the earth.”

“It is related from Abu Ayyub that a man said to the Prophet ﷺ, ‘Tell me an action which will ensure my entrance into the Garden. Someone asked, ‘What does he want? What is wrong with him?’ The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘What he wants is to know something. [To enter the Garden] worship Allāh and do not associate anything else with Him, establish the salāh, pay the zakāh and maintain ties of kinship.’”

“It is related from Ibn °Abbās, ‘The Prophet ﷺ sent Mu°adh to Yemen and said, ‘Call on them to testify that there is no god but Allāh and that I am the Messenger of Allāh. If they comply with that, then let them know that Allāh has made the five prayers obligatory on them every day and night. If they comply with that, then let them know that Allāh has made the payment of zakat from their property obligatory on them, to be taken from the wealthy among them and given to the poor.’”

With that in mind now consider the following, “A study by the World Institute for Development Economics Research at United Nations University reports that the richest 1% of adults alone owned 40% of all global assets in the year 2000. The three richest people possess more financial assets than the lowest 48 nations combined. The combined wealth of the 10 million millionaires grew to nearly \$41 trillion in 2008. In 2001, 46.4% of people in sub-Saharan Africa were living in extreme poverty. Nearly half of all Indian children are undernourished.” I believe it will become immediately clear what the relationship is between paying zakāh and world peace, and by peace I don’t mean simply the absence of war or police or state violence.

Statistics show that the richest 1 percent of the US citizens own 40 percent of the total property of the country, while 80 percent of US citizens own just 16 percent. Since the 1990s, 40 percent of the increased wealth went into the pockets of the rich minority, while only 1 percent went to the poor majority.

From 1977 to 1999, the after-tax income of the richest 20 percent of American families increased by 43 percent, while that of the poorest 20 percent decreased 9 percent, allowing for inflation. The actual income of those living on the lowest salaries was even less than it was 30 years ago.

The income of the executives of the largest US companies in 1992 was 100 times that of ordinary workers, and 475 times higher in 2000.

If °Islām was accepted on a global scale in the world today, starvation would be eliminated from the planet within the first year. The Zakāh due on agricultural products ranges from 5% to 10% of the produce. There is also Zakāh due on various types of animals such as sheep, cows and camels. Imagine if 5%-10% of all agricultural production in the world, plus the required amounts on animals, were distributed among the hungry and starving people of this world. The problem would be solved immediately. In the system we have today, some nations intentionally let go to waste a part of their agricultural production in order to maintain high prices for their produce. Can you see the difference between the system driven by human greed and the zakāh system of °Islām, which was prescribed by Allah ﷻ?

In addition, °Islām can greatly solve the problem of poverty. Consider that the zakāh due on money is 2.5% on money that has been in one's possession for over a year. Now consider this simple fact: Forbes Magazine reported that in 2004 there were 587 billionaires worldwide, with a combined net worth of \$1.9 trillion dollars. If in 2004 these 587 richest people in the world paid zakāh, we would have had \$47.5 billion dollars to be distributed among the poor.

This calculation takes into consideration less than 600 people on this earth. What about if everyone contributed to a global zakāh fund in the same way? The total world GDP (summation of gross domestic product of all countries in the world) was estimated in 1999 to be \$27,357.9 billion dollars. The 2.5% zakāh on this would amount to \$683.95 billion dollars annually. These ball park figures give a general idea of how much money zakāh could possibly generate.

This zakāh should not only be distributed for immediate relief to the poor. It can also be given in the form of small business loans. For example, poor farmers can be given loans or even grants from the zakāh to enable them to purchase the equipment and materials they need to raise their standard of living.

The same can be done for small business owners, or for the poor to set up small workshops or factories to lift them out of poverty once and for all. Within a few years, poverty could be eliminated or at least greatly reduced throughout the entire world.

Is this not a peace plan that could really work or, at least, go a very long way to eliminating one of principal causes of war and strife not only on a societal and communal level but also on the level of families struggling to make ends meet and the suffering that stems from grinding poverty which in turn leads to all forms of domestic and family violence as well as the state of individual hoplessness?

In this context it would seem fitting and appropriate to consider the fourth of the five basic prescribed actions of the Muslim which is the annual fast during the month of Ramaḍān when Muslims neither eat, nor drink nor smoke nor engage in sexual activities from the crack of dawn to the setting of the sun.

Why the reader/listener might ask? What does fasting have to do with peace? And why when we are discussing poverty in the world do you want to talk about fasting? What does that have to do with changing the outlook of the 587 richest people in the world?

Hunger!

To start out here in the United states. Over 49 millions Americans, 32.4 million adults and 16.6 million children, live in households classified as “food insecure” meaning simply there is not enough to eat – all the time – day after day and worse, night after night.

Worldwide 25,000 people die every day of hunger or hunger-related causes, according to the United Nations. This is one person every three and a half seconds.

What would that mean then if the 587 richest people in the world paid zakāh and there were \$47.5 billion dollars to be distributed or, better, the zakāh on GDP would equal some \$683.95 billion dollars annually.

Now maybe you know that and I know that but they don’t seem to know that what is needed is redistribution and equity which is what zakāh does. The question is how do people come to understand that?

Fasting (*sawm*/صوم) teaches those who fast precisely what hunger is.

What does it mean when we say that 4 billion people live on less than US\$2 a day and another 1 billion live on less than a dollar a day.

For many of those who who are either reading or hearing this talk those numbers remain just that – numbers. Abstractions that don’t readily translate into real life comprehension.

It is estimated that roughly 47% of the worldwide Muslim community of some 1.4 billion people fast the month of Ramaḍān, which calculates out into some 650 million people.

Potentially all of these people have, among other benefits, the possibility of understanding, to some degree, what it means, at the least, to be hungry and thirsty. Not as an abstraction but as a reality.

This provides fasting people the possibility of not only understanding but, more importantly, empathizing at a very basic level with those members of the world community who have no food or drink, not just during one month a year but for the whole year and every year.

This empathy makes it possible to understand, even if only for a brief time, the plight of the poor and more importantly, to empathise with them, which means, according to the dictionary, “to understand and share the feelings of another”.

This empathy is what makes it more likely than fasting people will actually pay their zakāh as one of the principle beneficiaries of the zakāh are precisely the poor, hungry and needy.

Fasting as a social phenomenon in short is synergistic and directly results in a reduction of a major source of social unrest: poverty.

Of course beyond these temporal and worldly returns is a deeper and more abiding reason why fasting is prescribed by Allāh ﷻ.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ  
كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

yā āyūha-l-ladḥīna āmanū kutiba °alaykumu-ṣ-ṣiyāmu  
kamā kutiba °ala-l-ladḥīna min qabālikum la°allakum tattaqūn

Oh you who have come to belief, fasting is prescribed for you  
just as it was prescribed for those who came before you  
in order that you may have *taqwa*.

(Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:183)

There are a number of things that must be understood about this °ayāt but the key to all of them is the word *taqwa*, which Allāh ﷻ tells us is the real reason for our fasting.

*Taqwa* is a word that is most often mistranslated as “Fear of Allāh”, which is why I have chose not to translate it above.

As Allāh ﷻ brings to our attention in the Qurʾān, the main objective of our fasting is to attain this state of *taqwah* which I prefer to translate as “Awe of Allāh” or “Consciousness of Allāh” or “Awareness of Allāh” but definitely not “Fear of Allāh” which is *khwaf min Allāh* in Arabic (الخوف من الله).

“Awe of Allāh ﷻ” or “Consciousness of Allāh ﷻ” or “Awareness of Allāh ﷻ” or more properly, *Taqwah*, is central to the life of the believer; its definition includes the constant reference, awareness, mindfulness of Allāh ﷻ, in addition to ensuring that everything one does is in accord with obedience to, and the pleasure of, Allāh ﷻ.

This consciousness is not static but dynamic. The level of *Taqwah* is dependent upon how close one is with Allāh ﷻ. This personal relationship is established and strengthened by following a unique program of five basic activities and other supererogatory activities that have been prescribed, as we have been trying to explain, by Allāh ﷻ.

Some of these supererogatory (*nāfl*/نافل) activities driven by personal initiative during Ramaḍān include increased prayer as well as increase in the degree of remembrance (*dhikr*/ذکر) of Allāh ﷻ, the giving of charity (*sadaqa*/صدقة) (not to be confused with *zakāh* which is a requisite and is *paid* not given), meditation, reading and reflecting on and memorising Qurʾān and doing daily supplications. All of these actions are increased and intensified during the month of Ramaḍān.

During this month spiritual activities intensify, as mentioned above: certain social actions are also highly recommended such as forgiving others, establishing deeper communal bonds, spreading peace, taking to task corrupt and oppressive regimes, speaking truth to power, and the nightly fast-breaking with the community (*ʾiftār*/إفطار).

The fast of Ramaḍān conveys an extraordinary sense of emotional enthusiasm and religious eagerness among Muslims of all ages, and it is the month that makes the believer feel alive, and allows him to reconcile his existence with his divinely prescribed purpose – the worship of Allāh ﷻ.

As such, *taqwah* is an essential element in Islamic spiritual practice. Without it, the Muslim’s behaviour and attitude are corrupted. Unlike the secular view, Islam has a unique perspective on spirituality as it encompasses all aspects of the Muslim’s life. In °Islām all actions that are referred to Allāh ﷻ are innately worship and essentially spiritual.



Beyond our understanding of *taqwah* and its integral connection to fasting (*ṣawm*), that can be derived from the °ayāt in Sūrah al-Baqarah is the understanding that fasting, like *zakāh*, is not something new that was brought to us by the Prophet ﷺ in the Qur°ān.

Note the meaning of the words of Allāh ﷻ, “Fasting is prescribed for you just as it was prescribed for those who came before you.”

Fasting therefore is not something new and unique to °Islām.

There is ample evidence of fasting in the so-called “Wisdom” religions and in the realm of Semitic revelation we find fasting mentioned both in the Tanakh and the °Injīl (Old and New Testaments).

The Prophet Mūsā ؑ fasted for forty days and forty nights, twice back-to-back, without food or water; the first, immediately before he received the tablets on the mountain from Allāh ﷻ. And the second, when he came down from the mountain and found Bani Isra’īl practicing idolatry in the form of the golden calf (Deuteronomy 9:7-21).

In the case of the Prophet °Isa bin Maryam ؑ, he fasted for forty days and forty nights while in the desert and was tempted by Shayṭān to turn stones into bread and eat them (Matthew 4:2, Luke 4:2).

The Prophet ﷺ said of fasting in a Ḥadīth Qudsī when Allāh ﷻ speaks on his tongue, “For every good deed there are ten and up to seven hundred rewards save for fasting. Fasting is for Me and I am the reward.” He also said, “Everything has a door and the door of worship (‘*ibādah*’/عبادة) is the fast.” Indeed it was when the Prophet ﷺ was fasting that the revelation of the Qur°ān began.

The Prophet ﷺ also observed, “Some people fast and all they get is hungry,” and for this reason the Ṣufis and the Knowers by Allāh (*al-°arifīn*/العرفين) distinguished between different levels of fasting.

The first is the fasting from all that would obviate the fast, and this is the fast of the common people, and is known as temperance or moderation. The second level is when there is added to this the fasting of the organs of the body as, for instance, the fast of the tongue from backbiting or the eye from looking with desire or doubt or suspicion or the fast of the hand from grasping that which does not belong to it or the fast of the feet from carrying one where one has no business, and this is the fast of the elite. The third level is when one adds safeguarding the heart from evil thoughts and whisperings.

At this level one renders the heart submiissive to the remembrance of Allāh ﷻ and the witnessing of Allāh ﷻ in His Manifestations (*aṣ-ṣifāt* / الصفات) and His Names (°*asmā' allāh al-ḥusnā* / أسماء الله الحسنى).

This is the fast of the elite of the elite, the perfection, and the sought-after goal when one hears Allāh ﷻ say,

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ • ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً

فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي • وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي

yāā °ayuhā-n-nafsu-l-muṭma'inah •

°irji°īla rabbika rāḍiyatan mardīyyah •

fadā khulī fī °ibādī • wa-°adākhulī jannatī •

oh you whose self is tranquil

return to your Lord pleased and well pleasing

enter with My worshippers – enter My Garden.

(Sūrah al-Fajr 89: 28-30)

And if that is not peace, what is?

From this there is but one thing left which is the return to the first house of the human beings on this earth – The Ancient House (*al-baytu-l-°atīq* / البيت العتيق) in which our father and mother, °Ādam and Hawā° dwelt when they first met on this Earth after their expulsion from the Garden.

It was on the Mount of Mercy (*jabalu-r-raḥmah*) in °Arafat that °Ādam and Hawā, separated for some 200 years following their expulsion from the Garden, recognized each other and were reunited.

Let us go back and examine the events that took place after the story we told at the beginning of this essay, when Shayṭān refused to bow down to °Ādam and what the Shayṭān never understood concerning the order of Allāh ﷻ.

What Allāh ﷻ was asking Shayṭān to bow down to was **not** the clay and water from which Allāh ﷻ had formed °Ādam, but rather the existentiating sigh of compassion (*naḥas raḥmanī* / نفيس رحمني) by which Allāh ﷻ made the clay and water to come alive, which is the secret of °Ādam and all people (*an-nās* / الناس) from then until now.

“Then He made him and breathed into him of His Spirit; and appointed for you hearing and sight and hearts. Small thanks do you give!”

°Islām is Salām

وَفَخَّ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِهِ

wa nafakḥa fīhi min rūḥih

and [He] breathed into him of His Spirit

(Sūrah Sajda 32:9)

It was this Spirit, the Ruḥ (روح) that Allāh ﷻ demanded that the Shayṭān bow down to, but Shayṭān in his pride and arrogance couldn't see that and imagined only that Allāh ﷻ wished him to bow down to something (clay) which was outwardly inferior to what he imagined himself to be (energy or fire), not knowing what it was that °Ādam ﷺ truly and uniquely represented in the whole of the creation.

Allāh ﷻ breathed into °Ādam ﷺ something of His own Spirit. The soul belongs to Allāh ﷻ — the soul that people refer to as theirs is actually the Spirit of Allāh ﷻ. With His omniscience and infinite creative power, Allāh ﷻ performs this creation in such a perfect manner that, as a part of the test, people are able to assume ownership of this soul bestowed on them and say it is “mine.”

°Ādam ﷺ as such is the divine mirror in which the reflection of the divine qualities manifests. For instance, a Name of Allāh is the All-Seeing (*al-baṣīr*/البصير). Through this name °Ādam ﷺ and, by extension, human beings are able to see. Or one of the Names of Allāh is The Patient (*aṣ-ṣabūr*/الصبور) and through this quality the human is patient, and so forth through all the 99 known and mentioned Names of Allāh ﷻ as well as the 1001 not named, but inferred, in Qur'ān. All that we are is the result of that existentiating sigh of compassion (*nafas raḥmanī*/نفس رحمني), which alone truly gives us being and life.

It is also necessary to understand that °Ādam ﷺ is *the* human being.

°Ādam ﷺ is not a he or she as is clear from the following °āyat:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ  
وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسًا

yā āyyuha-n-nāsu °ittaqū rabbakumu  
alladhī khalaqakum min nafsiñw-wāḥidatin  
wa khalaqa minhā zawjahā  
wa baththa minhumā rijalān kathīran wa nisā

°Islām is Salām

Oh you people!

Be conscious of your Sustainer, Who has created you out of one self  
(*nafsiñw-wāhidatin*),  
and out of her created its mate,  
and out of the two spread abroad a multitude of men and women.  
(Sūrah an-Nisā° 4:1)

It is very important to realise this and to understand that when we say °Ādam ﷺ we are not referring to some particular he or she but rather to that from which we human beings all derive and have our source.

This is because the Spirit of °Ādam ﷺ was also from the Light of Allāh ﷻ and by extension all human beings are endowed with that Light of Allāh ﷻ. In as much as Allāh put His Spirit and Light in °Ādam ﷺ, so He put his Spirit and His Light in all of us.

Death is simply the time when that Spirit (*ruh* /روح) and Light (*nūr* /نور) return to whence they came in the first place even though people, as we mentioned earlier, mistakenly assume ownership of this soul (*nafsiñw-wāhidatin*) bestowed on them, claiming it is “mine.”

Another myth that needs to be put to rest is the myth that Allāh ﷻ for some reason wasn't aware of what He was doing when He originally placed the first two humans, our mother and father, °Ādam and Hawa ﷺ, in the Garden and set before them the object of temptation which precipitated their coming to this world called “The Earth”.

This is by no means the Truth as we can see from this °āyat.

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

wa-idh qāla rabbuka li-l-malāā°ikati °innī jā°ilūn fī-l-°ardi khalīfatan

And recall the time when your Sustainer to the angels:  
truly I am going to place a representative (*khalifah*) on the earth.  
(Sūrah Baqarah 2:30)

The Sharīf of the Family of the Prophet ﷺ, the Sidīq and the Ghawth Shāykh Abu al-Hasan al-Shādhḍhūlī al-Mālikī ﷺ, said concerning this subject,

“°Ādam ﷺ was created by the Hand of Allāh ﷻ and He caused the angels to bow down to °Ādam ﷺ. He caused him to dwell in the Garden and then He brought him down to earth. Before creating him He said to the angels,

“I am going to place a representative (*khalifah*) on the earth.”

“He, Praised be He, did not say, ‘in the Heavens’ nor did He say, ‘in the Garden’.

“The descent of °Ādam ﷺ to this earth was not a disgrace but an honor destined in his very creation. In the Garden, Ādam ﷺ worshipped Allāh ﷻ by knowledge (*bi ta‘arif*). After he came down to Earth he worshipped Him by appointment (*bi-takhlif*). When these two forms of submission were present in him he deserved to be the *khalifah* or representative of Allāh ﷻ on this earth.

“You too have a share of Ādam ﷺ. Your beginning was in the heavens of the spirit (*samāā’i-r-ruh*) where you worshipped Allāh ﷻ on the day of ‘*Alastu bi-rabbikum*’ (Am I not your Lord? (7:172). Then you were born on this earth (°*ardu-n-nafs*) to worship Him by appointment. When the forms of submission are present in you, then you deserve to be the *khalifah*.”

From this we understand that all that happened to our parents in the Garden was foreknown by Allāh ﷻ and was their destiny and ours.

This is far from the mis-guided concept of “original sin” for it was all in the Knowledge of Allāh ﷻ so that we might know both our beginnings and who, in truth, is our enemy – ash-Shayṭān – °Iblīs.

Another important point, before we get to their meeting in the Valley of °Arafat, is the promise that Allāh ﷻ gave them, which was that even though they had to leave the Garden due to their disobedience, they and their children would always be provided with two things by Allāh ﷻ: Guidance (*hidāyah* / هداية) and forgiveness (*maghfirah* / مغفرة) and “Allah is All-forgiving – Mercy Full.” (Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:192)

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا ۖ فَمَا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا  
خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

qulnā °ihbiṭū minhā jamī°an fa-°immā ya°tiyannakum minnī hudan  
famañ tabi°a hudaya falā kḥawfun °alayhim wa lā hum yaḥzanūn

We said, ‘Get down from this state, every one of you!

Then when guidance comes to you from Me,  
those who follow My guidance will feel no fear and know no sorrow.’  
(Sūrah Baqarah 2:38)

°Islām is Salām

وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

wa-llāhu ḡhafūrur-raḥīm

and Allāh is forgiving – merciful  
(Surāh Hujjarat 49:5)



When our parents came to this earth they came seperately and arrived in two different locations. Popular stories locate the place of Adam's ﷺ arrival in Serendib or Ceylon and Hawa's ﷺ place of arrival somewhere in the Great Rift Valley in Africa. And Allāh ﷻ knows best.

A long period of seperation, some say 200 years, followeing which, as a result of their magnetic attraction (*jadhāb* / جذاب) to each other, they gradually made their way to one another. Some stories recount that °Adam ﷺ was lead by the Angel Jibrīl ﷺ to the present location of Jeddah on the Red Sea, where Hawā° ﷺ had returned to earth. Whilst her grave is in Jiddah, we still must say Allāh ﷻ knows best.

What we do know is that they were finally united on the Mountain of Mercy in the Plains of °Arafāt just ouside of what is now Makkah and that, essentially, this is the originial basis for the fifth prescribed act demanded of human beings by Allāh ﷻ, which is the pilgrimage (*hajj* / حج) to the Ancient House (*al-baytu-l-°atīq* / البيت العتيق).

Indeed the very word °*arafah* means 'he knew her'. The first spark of love emitted during this new meeting of °Ādam ﷺ and Hawa ﷺ here on earth promoted their mutual understanding of one another. It was the first sign of knowledge! °Ādam ﷺ knew Hawa ﷺ was of the same origin and nature that he was as there were no other human beings on the earth at that time, so we might speculate that our very existence is contemporaneous with the existence of knowledge, which is derived from love, and that indeed human history starts with this knowledge of him and her as it were and as it is!

After their initial meeting, they settled in the nearby valley of Bakka (بكة), also called Makkah, and there they raised some stone walls to about shoulder height as the *beduw* still do, and a black tent (*kiswah*) was sent down which covered them and it was there that they lived and it was there that the first human children were born and it is there that is the home of us all in the building now called the Ka°bah.

Bakkah (بكة) is a valley mentioned in Sūrah °Āl °Imran in °ayāt 96 as the site of the first masjid. The valley of Bakkah is the location of the city of Makkah (مكة) situated inside the valley. It is also identified with the Biblical ‘valley of Baca’ from Psalms 84 (Hebrew: בֶּכָה).

1. How amiable are thy tabernacles, Oh Lord of hosts!
2. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.
3. Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, oh Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.
4. Blessed are they that dwell in thy House: they will be still praising thee. Selah.
5. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.
6. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

Psalm 84, verses 4 - 6

So when the pilgrimage or Ḥajj is prescribed for the people (*an-nās*/الناس) it is first of all a commemoration of the journey of our father and mother to each other and their meeting on the Mount of Mercy.

Indeed the definitive action of the Ḥajj is the “standing on °Arafat” which commemorates that meeting of °Ādam ﷺ and Hawā° ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ said “Ḥajj is °Arafāt.” On this day, some two plus million pilgrims in simple unsewn white cloths or long dresses stand on and around Jabal °Arafāt (جبل عرفات) praying and seeking forgiveness from Allāh ﷻ. Those who have experienced the Standing describe a scene filled with emotion, a reminder of how we will all stand equal before Allāh ﷻ on the Day of Standing forth from the graves.



The next dimension of the Ḥajj centers around the Prophet °Ibrāhīm ﷺ, his Egyptian wife Hājar (هاجر) ﷺ, and his first-born son, °Ismā°il (إسماعيل) ﷺ.

Not long after °Ismā°il ﷺ was born, °Ibrāhīm ﷺ received instructions from Allāh ﷻ that he should take °Ibrāhīm ﷺ and Hājar ﷺ to a valley in the desert to the south of where they were living in Bir Saba°, or the Place of the Seven Wells (present day Beersheba).

The story is that one day not long after °Ismā'īl ﷺ was born, °Ibrāhīm ﷺ woke up and asked his wife Hājar ﷺ to wake °Ismā'īl ﷺ and prepare for a long journey. The child was still nursing at this time.

Setting off, they proceeded first through cultivated land and then desert and mountains until they reached the desert of the Arabian Peninsula and came to an uncultivated valley having no fruit, no trees, no food and no water. The valley had no signs of life. After °Ibrāhīm ﷺ helped his wife and child to dismount, he left them with a small amount of food and water which was hardly enough for two days. He turned around and walked away. His wife hurried after him asking: “Where are you going, °Ibrāhīm ﷺ, leaving us in this barren valley?” but °Ibrāhīm ﷺ did not answer her, and continued walking. She repeated what she had said, but he remained silent. Finally, she understood, knowing who he was, that he was not acting on his own initiative. She realized that Allāh ﷻ had commanded him to do this. She asked him: “Did Allāh ﷻ command you to do so?” He replied: “You know the truth.” Then his holy wife said: “We are not going to be lost, since Allāh ﷻ, Who has commanded you, is with us.”

°Ibrāhīm ﷺ then invoked Allāh ﷻ thus

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ  
عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْنِدَةً مِنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي  
إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ

rabbanāa °innī °askantu min dhurriyyatī biwadin għayri dhī zar°in  
°inda baytika-l-muħarrami rabbanā li-yuqīmū aš-ṣalāta  
fāj°al af°idatam-mina-n-nāsi tahwī °ilayhim  
wa-r-zuqhum mina-tḥ-ṭhamāratī la°allalahum yashkurūn

Oh our Lord!

I have made some of my seed to dwell in a valley with no cultivation,  
by Your Sacred House

in order, Oh our Lord, that they may rise up for the ṣalat.

So fill some hearts among men with love towards them,  
and provide them with fruits so that they may give thanks.

(Sūrah °Ibrāhīm 14:37)

He then went on to finish his supplication (*du°a°*) as follows:



رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مَا نُخْفِي وَمَا نُعْلِنُ  
وَمَا يَخْفَى عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ

rabbana °innaka ta°lamu mā nukhfi wa mā nu°linu  
wa mā yakhfa °ala-llāhi min shay°in fi-l-°arḍi wa-la fi-s-sama°

“Oh our Lord! Truly You know what we conceal and what we reveal.  
nothing is hidden from Allah, whether on earth or in heaven.”

(Sūrah °Ibrahīm 14:37)

and he turned his back and left them and did not return until °Ismā°il  
ﷺ reached the age “when he was old enough to work with him.”  
(37:102) though some say that he used to visit them regularly riding  
the back of al-Buraq but that story cannot be substantiated.

The story of what happened when he left and how his wife was  
directed by the Angel Jibril ﷺ to find the Spring of Zamzam and how  
the tribe of Jurhum of °Āl Qahatani originally from the Yemen, at-  
tracted by circling birds who were in turn attracted the newly found  
spring, came to settle there until a small town that was to become  
Makkah sprang up around the saintly woman Hājar ﷺ, and her son  
the Prophet °Ismā°il ﷺ who later married al Muḍaḍ ibn °Amr of  
Bani Jurhum but that is a tale that will have to be told another time.

Now we need to fast forward to the time which is substantiated by the  
following °ayāt from the Qur°ān, when the Prophet °Ibrahīm ﷺ came  
to visit his now nearly grown, presumably teen age, son.

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ  
قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَى فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ  
فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى ° قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ °  
سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ

fa-lammā balagha ma°ahu-s-sa°ya qala  
yā bunayya °innī °araya fī-l-manāmi °annī °adhḥubaḥuka  
fa-ñ-dḥur madḥā tara?  
qāla ya °abati °if°al ma tu°maru  
satajidunī °in shā°a-llāhu mina-ṣ-ṣabirīn

## °Islām is Salām

When he was of an age to work with him,  
he said, ‘My son, I saw in a dream that I must sacrifice you.

What do you think about this?’

He said, ‘Do as you are ordered, father.’

Allah willing, you will find me ready’

(Sūrah aṣ-Ṣāāffāt 37:102)

°Ibrahīm ؑ consulted his son, who willingly offered himself to what he understood from his dream to be the command of Allāh ﷻ. The choice of °Ibrahīm ؑ was Sacrifice (dhabīḥah/ذبيحة). That of °Ismāʿīl ؑ was Self-sacrifice: Martyrdom (°istashḥāḥād/استشهاد).

°Ibrahīm ؑ tied his heart to Allāh ﷻ, he took the °Ismāʿīl ؑ of his life in one hand and the knife of his faith in the other and he walked until he reached the place of sacrifice on the Mountain of Mercy.

When they left Mina on the way to °Arafāt, to that place of sacrifice which, as he had seen it in his dream, was the very same Jabal °Arafāt known as the Mountain of Mercy where °Ādam ؑ had reunited with Hawa ؑ after they came down to earth – Shayṭān appeared to °Ibrahīm ؑ and °Ismāʿīl ؑ three times trying to seduce them with honeyed words and subtle reasoning, Each time they turned back the Shayṭān by throwing rocks at him. These encounters are memorialised in the Ḥajj when the pilgrims throw stones at three pillars symbolizing the Shayṭān in a ritual called “Jamarāt”.

When °Ibrahīm ؑ left Mina and was brought down to the defile called al-Aqaba, the Shayṭān appeared to him at Stone-Heap of the Defile. Jibrīl ؑ said to him: “Stone him!” so °Ibrahīm ؑ threw seven stones at him so that he disappeared from him. Then he appeared to him at the Middle Stone-Heap. Jibrīl ؑ said to him: “Stone him!” so he pelted him with seven stones so that he disappeared from him. Then he appeared to him at the Little Stone-Heap. Jibrīl ؑ said to him: “Stone him!” so he pelted him with seven stones which is why Shayṭān is called *ar-Rajīm* or the Stoned One.

All three of the Jamarāt represent the Shayṭān: the first and largest represents Shayṭān’s temptation of °Ibrahīm ؑ against sacrificing °Ismāʿīl ؑ, the second represents his temptation of Hājar ؑ, the wife of °Ibrahīm ؑ, to induce her to stop him, and the third represents his temptation of °Ismāʿīl ؑ to avoid being sacrificed. Each time the Shayṭān was rebuked by stoning.

On his journey to Mount °Arafāt, °Ibrāhīm ؑ, was suffering while believing he was fulfilling his dream; at every moment it was possible for him to retract and turn back. Yet he continued on until he laid °Ismā'il ؑ on the ground, turning his face away from him to give strength to his crushed soul and paralyzed hand. °Ibrāhīm ؑ tied the hands and the legs of his son so as not to be disturbed by his pain and restlessness and went to sacrifice Ismā'il ؑ. He blindfolded himself and carrying the knife, enacted the command exactly as he had seen it in the dream. But when °Ibrāhīm ؑ removed his blindfold, he saw °Ismā'il ؑ by his side and in his place a full-grown ram lay before them. By the Grace of Allāh ﷻ the knife had not cut Ismā'il ؑ but instead, miraculously, a fully horned ram had been substituted for his beloved Ismā'il ؑ. °Ibrāhīm ؑ, trembled, as he feared he had failed to carry out what he had dreamt that he been ordered to do, until he heard a soothing voice say to him,

قَدْ صَدَقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا ؕ إِنَّا كَذَلِكْ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ

qadā saddaqtā-r-ru'yā – °inna kadḥalika najāzī-l-muḥsinīn

“You have fulfilled the visionary dream (*ru'yā*) .  
Surely this is how We reward the doers of good.”

(Sūrah aṣ-Ṣāāffāt 37:105)

The father and son ؑ left the mountain and immediately began to fulfill the second part of the °ayāt – “when he was of an age to work with him” – as they began to raise the foundations of the Ancient House once again on the foundation that °Ādam ؑ had first put in place, which had been wiped away at the time of the Great Flood.

There are many stories about the construction of the Ka'bah (الكعبة). Some say that Allāh ﷻ determined the place of the Ka'bah 2,000 years before the creation of Earth. When °Ādam ؑ was sent down to Earth he begged Allāh ﷻ for help and Allah sent down Baytu-l-Ma'mur, one of the jewels of the Seventh Heaven. It was sent down where the Ka'bah is now situated. There is a ḥadīth that says: “Oh °Ādam, I have sent for you a House, so circle it (*tawāf*/الطواف) as the angels circle My Throne.”

Some historians believe that all traces of the foundations Hazrat °Ādam ؑ had first laid down disappeared in the Great Flood at the time of Prophet Nuh ؑ as we have already mentioned,

Again there are many different stories. One is that Seth ؑ bin Adam ؑ aided his father in the construction as °Ibrahīm ؑ and his son, °Ismā'īl ؑ are credited with the actual reconstruction of the Ka'bah.

Allāh says in the Qur'ān: “Remember, We made the House a place of assembly for men and a place of safety. And take you the Station of °Ibrahīm as a place of prayer. And We covenanted with °Ibrahīm and °Ismā'īl that they should sanctify Our House for those who perform ṭawāf around it, or use it as a retreat, or bow or prostrate themselves (before it) in prayer. And remember, °Ibrahīm said, ‘My Lord, make this a City of Peace and feed its people with fruits – such of them as believe in Allāh and the Last Day....”

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا ۖ  
إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

wa °idh yarfa°u °ibrahīmu-l-qawā°ida mina-l-bayti wa-°isma°ilu  
rabbana taqabbal minna °innaka °anta as-samī°u-l-°alīmu

And remember °Ibrahīm and °Ismā'īl  
raised the foundations of the House (with this prayer):  
“Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us:  
For Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-knowing.

(Sūrah al-Baraqaḥ 2:127)

And so it was that this House – this Ka'bah or Cube (so-called on account of its shape) once again became the House of Allāh and the House of Prayer for the *hunafa'* (حنفاء) or the monotheists of the Arabian peninsula as it was in the time of °Ādam ؑ and his son Seth ؑ.

قُلْ إِنِّي هَدَانِي رَبِّي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ دِينًا قِيَمًا مِّلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۖ  
وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

qul °innanī hadānī rabbī °īla širāṭin mustaqīmīn dīnan qīyaman  
millata °ibrahīma hanīfan wa mā kana mina-l-mushrikīn

Say!

“My Lord has guided me to a straight path, a well-founded *dīn*,  
the *dīn* of °Ibrahīm, a man of pure natural belief (*hanifa*).  
He was not one of the idolaters.”

(Sūrah al-°An°am 6:163)

And so it was once again the House of Prayer for the pure monotheists until the people reverted again to ignorance (*jāhaliyyah* / جاهلية) and idolatry (*shirk* / شرك) as they had once before until Allāh ﷻ cleansed the world with the Great Flood at the time Nūh عليه السلام.

Bu this time Allāh ﷻ did not send a Flood to cleanse the world of ignorance and idolatry; rather, He sent the man who would seal all prophecy, Muḥammad ﷺ, who was sent as a mercy to all the worlds and all beings.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

wa mā °arṣlanāka °illā raḥmatal-li-l-°ālamīn

and We have not sent you except as a Mercy to all the Worlds  
(Sūrah al-°Ambiyā° 21:107)



[Side Note: It is interesting to bear in mind that the Athanasian Creed (*quicumque vult*), which is a Christian statement of belief, focusing on Trinitarian doctrine and Christology, entered into wide use and was fully adopted by Christian churches in the sixth century AD. It is the first Creed in which the equality of the three persons of the Trinity is explicitly stated. The general acceptance of this creed marks the final failure of the pure teaching of the Prophet °Īsa bin Maryam عليه السلام and a geo-religious relapse back into the earlier realm of Mediterranean, Pharonic and Semitic paganism — a relapse closely followed by the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ in 610AD.]



We should of course make clear that things were no better and, perhaps, a good deal worse, in the Arabian Peninsula.

The Monotheistic Hunafā° (حنفاء) mission of the Prophet °Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and the work accomplished at Makkah in the restoration of the Ka°bah by °Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and his son, °Ismā°il عليه السلام as a center for the worship of the One G-d had come to a very bad turn.

Admittedly a few followers of °Ibrāhīm عليه السلام remained, and there had been an influx into Yathrib of several large groups of Bani Isra°il who were involved in date farming, as well as small groups or individual followers of the teachings of °Īsa عليه السلام and his cousin Yaḥya عليه السلام, but idolotry, superstition, alcohol abuse, sex, magic and polytheism had brought about the return of the age of ignorance (*jāhiliyyah* / جاهلية).

By the time of the advent of Muḥammad ﷺ, the Ka'bah had become the temple and fane for some 360 idols. Whether that is the exact number or not is not really the point – the point that if a circle can be said to have 360 degrees, every possible point had an idol of one form or another wherever you turned.

This of course had been a great economic boon to Makkah, which was at that time the 7<sup>th</sup> century equivalent of pre-Disney Times Square or Las Vegas, albeit with a pagan religious flavor and bent.

Every tribe and political, cultural or economic grouping was represented by their own unique idol or god, each of which was housed and worshipped in or around the Ka'bah. The polar opposite of what °Adam, Seth, °Ibrahīm and °Ismā'īl ؑ had worked to bring about.

Functionally this meant that the city was constantly being visited by a wide range of pilgrims, all of whom had come to worship their own idol or god and, importantly, to do business, as Makkah had also become a central point for caravans going north to Damascus in Shām and south to the Yemen or what the Romans termed *Arabia Felix* and opposed to *Arabia Deserta* or the dry desert heartlands of the Najd.

This then was the environment and milieu into which the Prophet ﷺ was born and in which he was raised save for the brief time when he dwelt among the *bedu* at the time he was being suckled.

There remains the possibility that he did manage to come into contact with the Hunafā° or even the rare followers of °Isā and Yaḥya ؑ and certainly he must have met members of Bani Isra'īl since they were heavily involved in the caravan trade. We know of one instance when he was about the age of twelve, and taking part in the caravan to Damascus, where he met a Nestorian Christian monk called Bahira. But any such meetings or association would have been the exception rather than the rule. Muḥammad's ﷺ milieu, as we have said, was the idol worshipping pagan world of the Arab and Makkan *jāhiliyyah*.

There is, however, another dimension which must be understood, which was that all of the Prophets ؑ knew somewhere in their being from their birth that they had a certain unique destiny but, equally, the case may be made that they have to discover that destiny even if they have certain inchoate intimations or even actual prophetic access as in the case of °Isa ؑ speaking in his cradle or Mūsā ؑ in his youth when he lived in the household of the Pharaoh.

But in that idol worshipping pagan world of the Arab *jāhiliyyah*, that world of Las Vegas and the old pre-corporate Disney Times Square, Muḥammad ﷺ stood out and gradually he earned a name for himself – al-°Amīn – which means ‘the honest one’.

And, after his marriage to a rich Makkan widow by the name of Khadijah ؓ who had her own caravan train and who had initially employed him because he was truly ‘al-Amīn’ – thoroughly honest and trustworthy – and wound up marrying him, he began to develop a taste for solitary meditation and fasting, most often in a cave in a mountain called Jabal an-Nūr or the Mountain of Light. He did this at different times but most often in the sacred month of Ramaḍān which was then, as it is now, a month when many people fasted.

It was during the month of Ramaḍān when he was in his fortieth year and fasting, meditating and praying in a cave in the Mountain of Light that he had his epiphany – his meeting with the angel, in this case the Archangel Jibril ؑ, who brought him an oral revelation in the form of words that were written in light upon his heart.

At first he thought he was possessed and went to his wife, whom he trusted implicitly and explicitly, for reassurance or clarification and she, trusting his total honesty and innate goodness, reassured him and took him to her cousin, a Christian who was a self taught scriptural scribe, by the name of Waraqah. He not only affirmed the validity and veracity of the Message that Muḥammad ﷺ had received from the Angel ؑ, but recognised that he was the long-awaited Prophet ﷺ.

Awaited in the sense that, after the subversion of the message of °Isā bin Maryam ؑ, it was metaphysically necessary that someone had to restore the true and original montheistic teachings of both °Isā and Yahya ؑ as well as Mūsā and °Ibrāhīm ؑ, as it is not possible that the world be without the Truth of the Oneness and Singularity of G-d.

I would like to reiterate here what I said in the very beginning of this essay, which is that this knowledge and belief, and equally, or even more importantly, the act of complete submission (°istislām/استسلام) to that Absolute Oneness and Singularity of G-d or, more properly Allāh ﷻ is the only true means to peace or al-°Islām.

I say the use of the word “Allāh” is more proper because G-d (even with a dash in then middle of it) is an ambiguous word, since it allows for such words as God, god, gods, goddess and goddesses etc.

Whereas the word Al-Lāh (*the* Deity) or Allāh ﷻ has neither upper nor lowercase or singular or plural and, historically has never meant other than what it says – the Deity without there being any other. This may seem like a quibble but it is a most important understanding.

Having gotten this far I realise that although I have, I hope, fairly clearly made the point of how the ṣḥadah, the ṣalah, the fasting and zakāt lead to peace, I have still not really tied up the strings in the case of the Ḥajj so, having at least introduced the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, I need to try and clarify for the reader/listener the connection between individual and collective peace in the case of the Ḥajj.



For myself the making of Ḥajj has one really sustaining memory, though of course there are many, but the one that never leaves my mind's eye is the gathering on the plains of °Arafat and the sheer numbers of people all dressed in identical white garments, men and women, from every country in the world, red, white, black, brown, yellow and every imaginable color in between, speaking tens of different languages, young, old and in between, all together involved in worship and supplication and the endless cries of the supplication:

لَيْتِكَ اللَّهُمَّ لَيْتِكَ، لَيْتِكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ لَيْتِكَ،  
إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ وَ النِّعْمَةَ لَكَ وَ الْمُلْكُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ

“labbayk Allahumma labbayk. labbayka lā sharīka laka labbayk.

°innal-hamda wa-n-ni°mata laka wa-l-mulk. lā sharīka lak.”

“Here I am O Allāh, Here I am. Here I am, You have no partner, here I am. Surely all praise, grace and dominion are Yours, and You have no partner.”



Sometimes it felt like the end of time, the Day of Rising from the Grave. Sometimes it felt like a scene out of the movie *Apocalypse Now* and sometimes like the Apocalypse and the Last Day itself.

All these people, all the nations, all the colors, all the languages, the rich, the poor, the young, the old – all somehow united in the most basic act of worship and supplication. People laughing, people crying, people grieving, people pushing, people yielding...people...people.

All the children of °Ādam and Hawā° ﷺ united in this inimitable act the like of which simply doesn't exist outside of this moment of Ḥajj.

And I thought then and I still think now, “This is it! This it it! This is the Reality. This is how it was and this is how it is and this how it will be long after there is no me or thee or them. This *is* the life.

In any case I have no doubt as to how the Ḥajj leads to peace, internal, external, individual, collective. No one I have ever met who performed the Ḥajj ever felt that they were the same person who got on the plane, or in my case the boat, or the bus or the car or even one old man I met in Doha who had made Ḥajj by camel and a quirky German Muslim who made Ḥajj, at least from Jeddah, on a donkey.

Changed. All changed. Never the same.

If you are a Muslim reading or hearing this and you haven't made Ḥajj...do it. If you are a non-Muslim reading this there are movies and YouTube clips on Ḥajj. See them! If you are a reader then read the biography of al-Ḥajj Malik Shabaz, aka Malcom X.

You owe it to your self.



With this I pray I have clarified the original premise with which I began this talk or essay, which is that the way to peace – internal, external, individual, collective – is through submission to Allāh ﷻ and fulfilling those actions that Allāh ﷻ has prescribed for all of us.

You may say, and have every right to say to me – to question me – “Why then, if all of this is true, is there so much strife and violence in the Muslim world? Why if all of this leads to peace...why then does it seem that there is very little peace within the Muslim world?”

I usually answer this question with a story about a very influential woman jurist from Iran: Shirin Ebad, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

Shirin Ebadi (شیرین عبادی) is an Iranian lawyer, a former judge, human rights activist and founder of the Centre for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran. On October 10, 2003, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her significant pioneering efforts for democracy and human rights, especially women's, children's, and refugee rights. She was the first ever Iranian, and the first Muslim woman, to have received the prize and she went unrecognized by her government.

I heard her being interviewed on the radio one day by a western woman journalist who was setting all kinds of subtle traps pushing her to denounce °Islām. The interviewer finally came out and said something really bald like, “So °Islām is not a good thing, right?”

She answered, “No! °Islām is perfect.” The interviewer was taken aback and seemed non-plussed by this answer, which is certainly not what she thought she would have replied, and asked her to explain.

Shirin Ebadi replied (and here I am paraphrasing as I don't remember her exact words), “Islām is perfect and its perfection has led to its being accepted by so many people, so many cultures, so many civilizations all over the world. Each of these cultures and civilisations have their positive and negative traits, their faults and flaws. When people or peoples accept °Islam they accept it to the degree that they can, that it is possible for them. Their various cultural faults and flaws are still there. Some are subsumed but others persist. The imperfection does not rest in °Islām but in how much they can accept it and to the degree that they apply it in their lives.”

So that is what I would answer to those who ask “Why then, if °Islam is so perfect, are Muslims so imperfect?”



Let me conclude this talk and essay by trying to sum up in the few remaining pages what I am basically attempting to communicate and also share some of my feelings about the current state of affairs in the world vis-a-vis individual and world peace.

Basically what I am saying is that if you want to reach a state of peace, you have to give up and surrender yourself to that which is ultimately more than your self and, in fact, to the Creator of your self and all other selves and indeed everything in the macro or microcosm. For simplicity's sake and accuracy we call this Creator – Allāh ﷻ.

This Allāh is neither the *Deus Otiosus* or the “idle god” who largely retired from the world on the seventh day and is no longer involved in its daily operation, which is a central tenet of Deism nor is it the *Deus Absconditus* or the “hidden god” of Thomas Aquinas whose existence is not readily knowable or accessible by humans.

The concept of *Deus Otiosus* suggests a god who has grown weary of involvement in this world and who has been replaced by younger, more active demi-gods, whereas *Deus Absconditus* suggests a god who has consciously left this world to hide elsewhere or is resting somewhere after the work of creating the universe and all it contains.

To the contrary, Allāh ﷻ is actively involved every second and every place before and after all time and space and Allāh ﷻ is intimately involved in all of creation and especially in that sentient part of creation which includes the angels (light beings), jinn (energy beings) and humans. Allāh ﷻ describe His Own Being thusly (2:255):

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ۚ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ ۚ  
لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ  
يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۚ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ۚ  
وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۚ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

Allāhu lā °ilaha illa huwa-l-ḥayyu-l-qayyūmu  
lā ta°kḥudḥuhu sinatun wa lā nawm.  
lahu mā fi-s-samāwāti wa mā fi-l-arḍ.  
man dḥa-l-ladḥī yashḥfa°u °indahu °illā bi-idḥnih.  
ya°lamu mā bayna °aydīhim wa mā ḵalfahum  
wa lā yuḥītūna bi-shay°in min °ilmihi °illā bimā shā°a  
wasi°a kursiyyuhu-s-samāwāti wa-l-arḍ  
wa lā ya°uduhu ḥifḍḥuhumā : wa huwa-l-°aliyyu-l-°aḍḥīm

Allah, there is no deity but Him, the Living, the Self-Sustaining. He is not subject to slumber or sleep. Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him. Who can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them but they cannot grasp any of His knowledge save what He wills. His Foundation encompasses the heavens and the earth and their preservation does not tire Him. He is the Most High, the Magnificent.

In terms of the direct involvement of Allāh ﷻ in the affairs of human beings, Allāh ﷻ has from the beginning of time (and before time was) been actively involved in the human species having created humans (and everything else that exists) in the first place.

Throughout the time the human beings have been on this planet Allāh ﷻ has actively been involved in their fate, by sending both Messengers ﷺ and Messages. We know the names of 25 of the Messengers ﷺ (though we know that there are upward of 124,000 Messengers and that every nation and people have received the Message at one time or another) and we are familiar with the vestigial and often heavily edited remains of three of the earlier Messages: the Torah, the Zabūr (Psalms) and the °Injīl (New Testament) which have all finally been superseded in time by the Qurʾān, the Last and Final Testament, which contains the plan for humanity and represents the only functional means of attaining peace brought by adhering to that plan.

Furthermore we understand, and this is quite important, how to put the plan into action as a result of both reading the Message and careful observation of the life practices and works (*sunnah*/سنة) of the Final Messenger and the Seal of All the Prophets, Muḥammad ﷺ.

Our own message in this essay is that if you are seeking peace, internal and external, it is necessary to surrender and submit to this plan with all your heart, mind and soul. And that if you do this you will reach to the state of peace (*naḥsu-l-muṭmʾinah*/نَفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةِ) which will result in your hearing the call of Allāh ﷻ to enter into the state of Bliss called the Garden, in this world and the next.



I conclude this essay and talk with the words of a man who has been my friend for some forty years and who I first met at a bus stop on the Mount of Olives in Occupied Palestine in 1969. His name is Sīdī Shaykh Mūhammad Seyed al-Jamal, ar-Rifāʿī, ash-Shādhḍulī, of al-Quds ash-Sharīf, who has been a tireless worker and caller for peace, justice, mercy, love and freedom for as long as I have known him.



“People make war. People fight. Why do they fight? Why go to another country that is not yours to make war and fight? Why do you send your youth to die in other countries? Why do people do that? Is that not a deviation from the Way of Allāh ﷻ?”

“In °Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Pakistan, in Yemen, in Somalia, everywhere, why do these young people die? This is the story of the human being. This is your story, my story, all of our stories.

“Oh arrogant ones who claim to have knowledge, the ant knows more than you and the ant is more polite than you, for the ant does not harm anyone. You who are carrying the flag of destruction, the flag of ruining humanity. You listened to those who spread corruption all over the earth and joined with them. You lost mercy, you lost justice and you lost love. Allāh is calling you. Say, Oh Allah here I am (*labayk allāhumma labayk*). Put everything aside and escape to Allāh

“Let us work together with all of our hearts and minds and do our best to help one another, to unite with each other. Our way is the way of love. We should not deviate from our way. Our way is the way of peace and justice and mercy and love and freedom for all. We care for the animals, also, not just the humans. We care for the birds and the creatures of the sea. We care for all creatures. All beings. This is the teaching of Allāh. This our creed.

My body is here but know that my heart is everywhere. My spirit is everywhere with those who are suffering. I want everyone to walk the right path. Take the way of Allāh and raise the flag of peace and justice and mercy and love and freedom for the whole world. This is our religion, our way, our worship. This is the purpose of our worship. Allāh will not accept our prayers if we are not praying for others and helping and supporting others. Prayers must be translated into meaning, actualized upon this earth. We must bear these afflictions and disasters and suffering and bring heaven to earth.

“May all the rulers return to Allāh and start to establish His covenant throughout the earth so that the earth may be filled with true freedom and true justice and true love, May all rulers hear the words of our master guide °Ibrahīm ؑ and our master guide Mūsā ؑ and our master guide, °Isā ؑ and our master guide Muḥammad ﷺ. May the rulers establish and actualize their teachings. May Allāh make people loving to each other and full of peace.

I ask Allāh to let me see the flag of peace above every house so that all people can live in safety and security and so that true equality can be established here on earth. This is the message of the people of Sufism, the people of purification.

“We have had enough of tyranny, enough of pollution, enough of corruption. Let us come to a common ground using common sense. Let us go quickly to Allāh and follow His commands and carry His Message which was sent down to His prophets and messengers, peace be upon them all. This is the message of love and the message He wants for us. He wants love for us and love can encompass the entire creation. We pray that it will encompass everyone. That is why Allāh is calling us.

“There are tens of millions of people who are suffering and crying from illness, pain and calamity. Whose houses are bombed down upon them, whose wells are poisoned, whose orchards are uprooted, whose crops are destroyed and fields have been seized. Is this not what you see? How many have lost everything because of the actions of banks and companies that are somehow tied to the governments. Who is running all of this. It is Iblis in the form of human beings.

“This is happening across the whole earth and this is the journey of suffering. For the sake of suffering I cry and for the sake of suffering I pray. So pray with me always and be with Allāh always so that you have mercy for your selves and for everything that Allāh created.

“We will bring our tears to Allāh to ask for the deep mercy, for the deep peace. This is the prayer that comes from the depths of the soul. For this reason I cry day and night. All of the pictures I have seen in this life – this journey of torture and pain, This is what I see and I describe it in order to move the hearts of people everywhere. I am not afraid to speak the truth. I am not afraid to be imprisoned or confined. Allāh commands me to speak the truth. It is not in my hands.

“This is the trust I carry and that you carry. We have to raise our voices so that Allāh may hear them. Our voices of worship and praise. This is the journey to the promised land – the land wherein there is a divine garden – a garden of joy and happiness – a garden of peace and justice and mercy and love and freedom for all.”



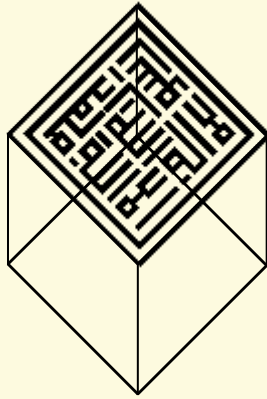
وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

wa mā °arslanāka °illā rahmatal-li-l-°ālamīn

and We have not sent you except as a Mercy to all the Worlds  
(Sūrah al-°Ambiyā° 21:107)



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